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THE GANNAL PROCESS,

BY WHICH

The Progress of Decay is Arrested;

THE CAUSES OF

CONTAGION OR INFECTION PREVENTED;

AND THE NECESSITY OF

EMBALMING SUPERSEDED.

4, *John Street, Oxford Street.*

August 1, 1840.

In no country, it is believed, is more decent and rational respect paid to the observance of every ceremony which concerns the Remains of a Deceased Relative or Friend, than in England; seeing that, in no country, the feeling of tender regard to the memory of the Departed is more affectionately cherished: and, if this has hitherto been the characteristic of Englishmen, it will be acknowledged that it is especially so at the present moment; when, in consequence of the increased population of the country, and the consequent crowded condition of the receptacles till now appropriated to the dead, Cemeteries are in progress of erection, not only in the environs of this great metropolis, but of most of the large cities and towns of the United Kingdom.

At such a moment, and under such circumstances, it can be little doubted, that a determination, on the part of the

Proprietor, to introduce into this country, with regard to Interments, the recently discovered Process, by means of which the remains of the Deceased can be preserved for a considerable length of time, without material change in appearance and without inconvenience or danger to the living, will meet with the same favourable reception in England, which has attended its establishment in France.

The Proprietor has been encouraged to take this step, from having witnessed, in numerous instances, the extreme distress occasioned to relations and friends, by the early appearances of decay; and from his conviction, that such distress will be greatly alleviated, by means of the said Discovery. He conceives, also, that where the place of sepulture may be situated at a distance, or where the members of a family may happen to be absent, it must be a source of great satisfaction to know, that a Process is ready for application, on the instant and at a moderate expense, which will preserve the body for an unlimited period from incipient decay, without alteration in its appearance or the presence of the slightest effluvia—which arrests putrescency and the liability to cause contagion—which occupies but a short space of time in the performance, and is unattended with any distressing exposure or disfigurement of the person—which may, when desirable, be performed in the presence of the nearest friends of the deceased, without giving pain to minds of the most delicate sensibility—and by the application of which, the usual, but very revolting mode of preserving the remains of the dead, by Embalming, will be superseded.

Among the numerous discoveries made, of late years, in the science of chemistry, none has, probably, been more favourably received on the Continent, than The Gannal Process;—so designated in France, from the name of the eminent chemist and natural philosopher, by whom it was first discovered in the year 1826; and who, after fourteen

years' unwearied skill and labour, has at length succeeded in bringing it to its present state of perfection. The attention of the Proprietor was first directed to the subject in the year 1838, shortly after his being appointed the Correspondent for England of the "ENTREPRISE GÉNÉRALE DES INHUMATIONS," established in Paris, by Royal Ordinance, for the conducting of Funerals, both public and private; and, so strongly impressed was he with a conviction of the many useful purposes, connected with Science and the Public Health, to which it might be rendered applicable, that he was induced to visit M. Gannal at Paris, and thereby become an eye-witness of his various experiments. The results of his personal observations were so highly satisfactory, that he lost no time in entering into an agreement with M. Gannal, by which that gentleman reserved to himself the patent presented to him by the French Government, and the Proprietor became the sole patentee of the Discovery for England—M. Gannal engaging to visit London, for the purpose of superintending those Arrangements which are now announced as being completed.

To the preceding statement, the Proprietor begs leave to subjoin a brief notice of the origin and progress of the Discovery in France; the rigid investigation it has undergone; the opinions of the Royal Academy of Sciences, and of the Royal Academy of Medicine of Paris, as to its decided superiority over every method hitherto known; the national rewards which have been bestowed upon the Discoverer; and the extraordinary rapidity with which it has established itself in the public favour.

In 1835, the Academy of Sciences of Paris, at the express desire of M. Gannal, appointed a Commission to inquire into, and report to them upon, the merits of his Discovery. The Commission lost no time in entering upon their labours, and, on the 28th of December in that year, reported to the Academy, that, after a careful investigation of the matters

referred to them, they felt themselves justified in bearing testimony to the extraordinary preservative qualities of the Proeess. They added, that they eonsidered it eapable of being rendered highly useful to various purposes of scienee; and, considering the obstaeles he had encountered and the difficulties he had overcome, they recommended that a sum should be awarded to M. Gannal, to encourage him to proceed with his experiments.

In the same year, in eonsequence of a letter addressed by the Minister of Commeree and Public Works to the Academy of Medieine, that learned body appointed a Commission, consisting of five of its most distinguished members; namely, Messieurs Sanson, Roux, Dizé, Guéneau de Mussy, and Breschet, to institute a similar inquiry. The result was, an elaborate report, drawn up by M. Bresehet; in which the Commission stated, that they eonsidered it their duty to direct the attention of the Academy and of the Government, to the great value of the Discovery; and they expressed a hope, that an advanee of the public money would be made to the Discoverer, to enable him to bring it to perfection.

In 1837, the same Commission made their second and definitive Report; in whieh they state that, during the preeeding two years, M. Gannal had been ineessantly oeeupied upon a series of experiments, with a view to aseertain the best mode of preserving Animal Substanees, and that he had at length sueeeeded in discovering a fluid, by the antiseptic properties of which, the remains of deeeased persons might, by the simple and delieate proeess of injection by one of the arteries, be preserved, for a considerable length of time, without any material change of feature or diseoloration of eountenanee. After detailing a variety of experiments, of which they had been eye-witnesses, and all of which had been attended with complete success, they gave it as their unanimous opinion, that

M. Gannal had rendered an important service to Science and Humanity ; and they further recommended, that their Report should be forwarded to the Minister of Public Instruction, directing his attention to a Discovery capable of being applied to so many useful purposes ; and likewise to the Minister for Commerce and Public Works, as a means whereby the Public Health might be placed on a surer foundation.

Both Commissions dwell upon the great utility of the Process, in preserving subjects for scientific purposes, in sultry seasons or in hot climates ; in preventing the danger arising to professional men, from accidental wounds or punctures made in their own hands, in the course of practice ; and in enabling deceased persons to be kept, for any length of time, in all cases where the causes of death may have been of a doubtful nature.

To the above striking facts, it will only be necessary to add a passage or two from the Report of the Commission of the Members of the Royal Institute, on awarding to M. Gannal the great prize, founded by the celebrated Baron Montyon, for the discovery of the best means of rendering any art or profession less insalubrious. The Commission state it to be their conviction, that the Process is at once simple, easy of execution, and economical ; and that the materials employed are of a perfectly innocuous description. Still further to confirm that conviction, they obtained the opinions of many of the most eminent anatomical professors throughout France ; and, among others, those of their colleague, M. Serres, and of M. Dubreuil, Dean of the Faculty of Medicine of Montpellier, M. Bourgery, M. Auzoux, M. Velpeau, and M. Amussat ; who were unanimously of opinion, that M. Gannal, by his Discovery, had put the world in possession of a Process which might not only be made available to scientific purposes,

but be rendered highly conducive to the General Health of the Community.

In consequence of the above powerful testimonials, the Process has been introduced into the great Anatomical Schools in Paris:—in nearly all the recent Interments of distinguished individuals the old and revolting mode of embalming has been superseded by the new and simple method:—and the Government of France, in cases of Suspicious Death, where the preservation of the body is likely to lead to the furtherance of the ends of public justice, have resorted to the Process; and with such success, that, in a recent instance of the murder of a youth at La Villette, the body, by being exposed, in a state of perfect preservation, at the receptacle of La Morgue, in Paris, for more than two months, led to the discovery of the murderer.

GEORGE SMITH.

4, *John Street, Oxford Street,*
August 1, 1840.

Times, January 22, 1839.

"At a meeting of the Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society, on the 8th instant, a letter, addressed to Mr. Money, one of the Fellows, by Mr. George Smith, of John-street, Oxford-street, was read by the Secretary. It stated, that he had obtained a patent for an improved process of embalming and preserving subjects for anatomical purposes; for which M. Gannal, the eminent French chymist, has also taken one out in Paris. It went on to detail some curious experiments which had been made by Mr. Gregory Smith, at his theatre of anatomy in Little Windmill-street, to show the preservative qualities of a fluid which he believed entirely prevented the ordinary effects of putrefaction in animal bodies after death, and invited the Fellows to view the

body of a man, who died on the 5th, and was embalmed on the 9th of November. This communication was accompanied by several specimens of birds, which had been subjected to the process, and which were found, at the end of more than two months, in a very extraordinary state of preservation, the flesh being perfectly soft and elastic, and not the slightest smell or taint discoverable, although no care had been taken to empty the crops of half-digested food, nor the intestines of feculent matter; nor had the birds been kept otherwise than freely exposed to the air of a common room with a fire in it. Mr. Gregory Smith detailed the particulars of the embalment, and invited the Fellows to inspect the body and the preserved birds. He stated, that in about half an hour a great change came over the body; that parts which had previously been soft and relaxed became firm and hard; and that the whole body resembled wax in appearance, and was nearly as firm: no perceptible change, he said, took place in the following three days, excepting that certain green marks on the neck and abdomen gradually disappeared. Dr. Merriman, stated that he had seen the body, and expressed his satisfaction at the great effect and the simplicity of the process. He said he had also examined the birds at Mr. Smith's house in John-street, and that no particular precaution had been taken in respect to temperature; but, on the contrary, they were kept hanging in a room with a fire in it. Several other members expressed their admiration at the appearance of the body, and were of opinion that the discovery deserved the immediate attention of the Faculty."

Literary Gazette, July 18, 1840.

"The subject is one of much public interest, and we have recently directed our enquiries into the particulars of the art, as practised by M. Gannal in France, and introduced into this country by Mr. George Smith. At his house we have examined several specimens of natural history, prepared by this means. All are in the most beautiful condition, without disagreeable odour, or any unpleasantness to offend the senses. There cannot be a question, we think, of the many useful and important purposes to which such a process may be applied. Against contagion or infection, if it be a guard, it may be employed to an invaluable extent. How much would the horrid vaults under our churches be benefitted by it! How readily may it be employed in preserving pet animals, as well as, generally, all specimens of natural studies and anatomical preparations! The testimony of Mr.

Smith, one of the first Undertakers in London, is sufficient to convince us of its applicability and value in many cases connected with the disposal of the dead. Were it only to preserve the bodies of strangers who die here, till their relatives or friends could come up from distant places, it would be of important service. We hope our readers will agree in considering, that it is a subject as particularly deserving of public consideration, as any to which we could devote our attention."

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